



Human Rights Report

from Congressman Joe Pitts

Spring 2006

Sixteenth Congressional District of Pennsylvania

Online: <http://www.house.gov/pitts/rights.htm>

MORE THAN 100 AMBASSADORS TURN OUT FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS EVENT

On February 14, 2006, Valentine's Day, I hosted an event for diplomats in Washington, D.C. to show the Lifetime Television miniseries *Human Trafficking*. The fictional miniseries traces three trafficking situations related to the U.S.: A woman trafficked to the U.S. from the Czech Republic, a teenager trafficked to the U.S. from Ukraine, and an American teen visiting the Philippines who is abducted and forced to service pedophiles that travel to that country to engage in sex with minors. Though graphic at times, the movie documents in detail the deception of the traffickers, the trauma of the victims and the determined work of investigators at the Department of Homeland Security. The miniseries will be playing again on Lifetime Television on April 22, 2006.

The purpose of the February 14th event was to



Congressman Pitts speaks out against the horrors of human sex trafficking during a speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

highlight the trafficking issues facing the U.S. and to encourage further cooperative initiatives between the U.S. and leaders from other nations. We had 97 countries represented with more than 125 Ambassadors and other diplomats in attendance. Please feel free to check out my website at <http://www.house.gov/pitts/trafficking.htm> for additional links to organizations working on trafficking issues.

The U.S. continues to move on the issue of human

trafficking. In January, President Bush signed into law the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005. The Act fills some of the loopholes found as additional trafficking cases come to light. Additional measures in the bill include the prosecution of federal and other U.S. government contractors who are involved in any

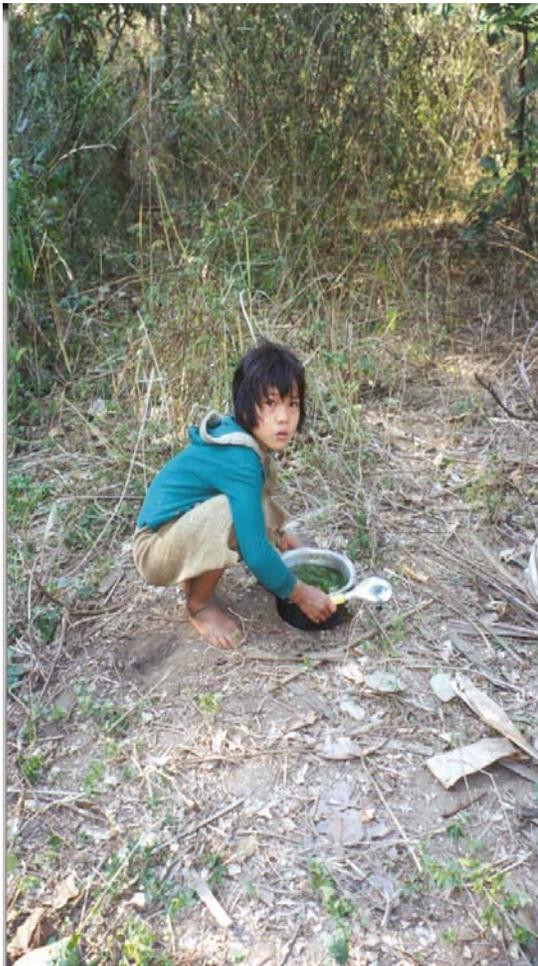
form of trafficking while working overseas; the incorporation of child protection and trafficking prevention activities as part of USAID, State Department, and Department of Defense activities in post-conflict and post-disasters situations; the strengthening of efforts to combat trafficking activities by peacekeepers; the addition of new legal tools to enhance prosecution of traffickers in the U.S.; and additional training programs

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WORLDWIDE DAY OF PRAYER HELD FOR BURMESE LIVING UNDER OPPRESSION

Sunday, March 12, 2006 was the Global Day of Prayer for Burma. This is a day on which people across the world pray for the people of Burma who have suffered so much under the Burmese military dictatorship. If you would like more information on this day, please contact my office at (202) 225-2411, and we can send you a brochure detailing the trauma of the Burmese people as well as some of their needs.

As a result of years of work by non-governmental organizations, Members of Congress, and an important report written by two heroes of the democracy and human rights movements, Vaclav



An internally displaced child attempts to survive in the jungles of Burma.

PHOTO CREDIT: Christians Concerned for Burma

Havel and Desmond Tutu, the UN Security Council is now looking at the case of Burma. Not only are there widespread human rights violations, but there is also the potential for Burma, if the military dictatorship remains in control,

to become a security threat to the region and the world. When I visited refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border in January 2003, the estimates were that the Burmese dictatorship was involved in the production and distribution of more than 1 billion methamphetamine pills being sent into Thailand and other countries. These drugs are then distributed throughout the world. In addition, there are reports that

the Burmese dictatorship has had contact with the government of North Korea on

drug and nuclear issues. The Havel/Tutu report can be accessed at http://www.uscampaignforburma.org/action/community_unsc.html.

As this newsletter was going to press, I received word of yet another attack on a Burmese village at the hands of the Burmese military regime, increasing the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burma by 3,400 in just the past few months. During these attacks, the military burns homes, places of worship, and food storage buildings and their contents. In addition, they attack and kill the men of the village and rape the women as a weapon of terror. It is now estimated that the total number of IDPs is between 600,000 and 1 million.

The suffering of the people of Burma has gone on long enough and the human rights violations must be stopped. However, there are also regional and international security threats that must be addressed. To find out more about the situation in Burma, feel free to log on to <http://www.house.gov/pitts/initiatives/humanrights/countries/burma.htm>.

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for local law enforcement officials.

While there are numerous reports of trafficking elsewhere in the world, there is not enough information about trafficking within the U.S. It is important that local communities are informed about these issues because frequently it is local citizens reporting suspicious activities to the proper authorities that helps bring traffickers to justice and results in the rescue of victims.

The most recent trafficking prosecution was in March, when "Sister Ping" was sentenced to 35 years in prison for her trafficking activities. Ping was involved in alien smuggling (different than human trafficking) that turned into trafficking when she and her cohorts would hold individuals prisoner until they paid their "smuggling" fees. Some "customers" ended up drowning in capsized boats, others were "guarded" and harassed by some of the most notorious gangs in New York's Chinatown. To read more about this case and other successful prosecutions in the U.S., you can log on to the Department of Justice website at http://www.usdoj.gov/whatwedo/whatwedo_ctip.html.

INDONESIA TO EXECUTE THREE HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

There is great concern over a case in Indonesia involving three humanitarian workers, Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus Dasilva, and Marinus Riwu. The government has accused these men of premeditated murder and fomenting sectarian violence and is planning to execute them. However, reports suggest that these charges are false.

Accounts reveal that in May of 2000, Tibo, Dasilva and Riwu entered conflict zones in order to rescue women and children and remove them from areas of danger. Reports also show the men rescued a police intelligence officer from Christian militia members who were about to kill him.

Corruption in Indonesia's justice system is well documented by multiple human rights organizations, and there is reason to believe corruption is playing a role in this case as well. We have received a number of reports regarding the conflict and the efforts of humanitarian aid workers serving at great risk to themselves. Unfortunately, it appears that these three men have become scapegoats for

those responsible for inciting violence.

A March 18, 2006 article in the *Jakarta Post* stated that "The Central Sulawesi Police have prepared four firing squads, comprising of [sic] 44 sharp shooters, to carry out the execution of three men convicted of killings in Poso in 2000." One of the many questions raised about the judicial process in this case

is the manner in which the deaths will be carried out. Forty-four shooters for the execution of just three men strongly

suggests the desire to turn the execution into a public display of power and intimidation.

The situation regarding ethnic and religious conflict in certain parts of Indonesia remains tense. Local community leaders have worked very hard to build peaceable relations between their communities. In the face of actions by extremists, and by individuals reportedly linked to the Indonesian intelligence and military services who are undermining peace efforts, these local leaders have continued to stand strong for peace. In



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Central Sulawesi, leaders continue pursuing peaceful relations despite bombings in houses of worship and marketplaces, snipers shooting worshippers attending church services, and the brutal killing of three Christian teenage girls on their way to school. It is vital that the United States and the international community support these peace-building efforts.

It is important to understand that religion is not seen as a major factor in the case of the three humanitarian workers scheduled for execution by the authorities. On the contrary, both Muslims and Christians have made a number of strong public appeals to the authorities not

to execute these three men. The rescued Police Intelligence Officer from Poso, Irwanto K. Hasan, provided a statement making it clear that Tibo protected him from the mob that wanted to kill him. In addition, former President Abdurrachman Wahid, a muslim, has made public statements appealing for a stay of execution for these three men. This advocacy across religious lines reflects the fact that this case, in the eyes of many, is not about religious tensions but about the travesty of political injustice.

At press time for this newsletter, the fate of the men was still uncertain, but I and other Members of Congress have advocated on their behalf and will continue to do so.

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